



Reports from the Citizen Focused Policing conference, January 2005, London



Customer Service
Leadership
Change
Citizen Focused Policing



In January the first Home Office sponsored conference on Citizen Focused Policing was held in London. Citizen Focus is a key priority within the National Policing Plan and a central element of the police reform agenda.

The conference, which focused on customer service issues and the victim and witness experience in particular, was attended by over 300 delegates from forces, authorities and key partner groups from around the country. Delegates heard from a wide range of key speakers, including Home Secretary Charles Clarke, and were able to choose from 12 key topic breakout sessions addressing issues relating to delivering a citizen focused service and improving the service user experience.

With the day's events captured and set out in sections relating to the customer experience, communications and relationships, call handling and change, this document provides an outline summary of what was said on the day.





“I believe the approach of partnership that was at the core of crime reduction, the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, is absolutely central to what we do.

It is critical to get the relationship between the law-abiding citizen and the police correct. And that is the fundamental responsibility of the police – to have a strong relationship with communities.

It must seem sometimes that there is a process of perpetual change but society is changing fast around us. We have to find the right way to change in order to meet those challenges. That’s why the Citizen-Focused Policing relationship is central to everything we do.”

Charles Clarke MP, Home Secretary

Getting relationships right

Citizen Focused Policing means that forces need to think not about doing more, but about doing differently. Here's why.



“Citizen Focused Policing forms an absolutely central plank of the Police Reform Programme and is one of the key priorities in the National Policing Plan. The whole of the Government’s public reform agenda is about trying to put the people, the citizens, right at the heart of public services.

This is about trying to change the way people experience policing and community safety services on the ground. With Citizen Focused Policing we are asking you to think about doing things differently and making it part of your core mainstream policing business. The kind of policing I want to see is not policing done to people; it is policing done with people and with their active co-operation. This is about driving organisational and cultural change in the service.

The public is entitled to feel that as users of the service their views are important, they are listened to and their feedback is acted on to improve the service and drive the change.

People get their information about the police from a whole variety of sources but their personal experience and that of their family and friends is the strongest influence.”

I think we have engaged on an exciting journey. Changing culture and transformational change is challenging and difficult but at the end of the day the rewards are incredible because you will have a public that not only feels safer in their communities but really, really values the police service.”

Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State



Chris Fox, President, ACPO

“Citizen Focus is crucial to policing and its operational delivery. We cannot be successful without a confident and safe public.

We have to respond to what the public wants, to be seen to respond and to have high quality contact with them. For some years one of our targets was the time it took to get to an incident not what we did when we got there, so staff were encouraged to get there quickly, do the job and get to the next one. This type of performance management affected the way people did their jobs and that’s why Citizen Focused Policing as a culture has to be at the centre of policing.

When you are looking at the National Intelligence Model locally, when you are tasking and employing, whether it be at beat or force level, when you are picking the priorities and targets, ask yourselves if you are picking the ones that the public really wants you to pick or the ones that feel right from our perspective.”



Baroness Ruth Henig, Chair of Association of Police Authorities

“Nothing affects people’s perception of policing more than the quality of service they receive from individual officers, what happens to them on the streets, at police station enquiry desks and, crucially, the tone of voice when the telephone is answered.

The APA welcomes the concept of putting communities at the heart of policing.

This is an ambitious agenda because it encompasses neighbourhood policing, stronger accountability, greater engagement and the active involvement of communities in policing.

I’m convinced that there is scope for a much more coherent approach that starts from the perspective of the citizen or service user rather than the consultation needs of individual service providers.

Responsive, accessible local policing focused on the needs of the user is very much at the heart of the reform agenda. All the consultations show that people are interested in very localised information.

The new Quality of Service Commitment which we shall all be working hard to implement will be an important step in setting some of the basic standards that communities can expect from their local service.

We need to be equally responsive to the needs and expectations of our staff and their ideas of how we can improve the way we do things as we are to our communities.”



Baroness Scotland, Minister of State

“This is a vital agenda for the Government. It is challenging because in many ways it calls for cultural change and change is always difficult.

We want to increase public confidence in the Criminal Justice System yet we won't if victims and witnesses have bad experiences of it.

The effect of erroneous expectations on public satisfaction and confidence can be very negative. If we keep people informed, if they really know what is going to happen then they are much better able to understand the process and participate in it. Managing expectations is important. Victims are satisfied with the outcome when they feel their complaint was taken seriously.

The National Policing Plan makes explicit the relationship between the citizen focused approach to policing and the outcome of an improved service for victim and witness.

Improvements have only been possible because people on the front line have put their shoulder to the wheel. We cannot do it on our own. We need each other; an inter-dependent system. If we each focus on delivering the best quality service and about how we can help each other then we will deliver it.”

Stephen Rimmer, Director of Policing Policy, Home Office

Citizen Focused Policing is at the operational core of what the service needs to do. The time is right for this and there is real resilience and enduring significance about our focus today. As far as I am concerned this is almost unprecedented.

I firmly believe that fundamentally policing is about human relationships. Policing is an intensely human public service activity and responsibility. It is about how the police relate to the public, to communities, to stakeholders and partners.

For me, the key to Citizen Focused Policing is driving forward in a vigorous way. Not warm woolly rhetoric but hard, deliverable policing services that matter to real people. This is not all 'easy option' stuff. It is difficult and challenging. It is going to be challenging for police officers, police managers, for partners, the government and others. But it is central to the agenda for all of us.



Shaping the service, together

“Building a great customer experience makes it easier to be better. It’s a big step that needs to be taken carefully” says Colin Shaw of Beyondphilosophy.com, a company specialising in the customer experience.

“A customer experience is an interaction between an organisation and a customer, it’s a blend, and that word blend is really, really, really important. It is not one thing or the other. Lots of people that we work with believe that there is a silver bullet, there is one thing that they can do that is going to solve it and provide a great customer experience. That’s not the case. It’s a blend of an organisations physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions

evoked. Each intuitively measured against customer expectation across all moments of contact”

“You get the customers that you deserve, if somebody phones and says I’ve had my house burgled and you say ‘yeah someone’s going to be out later on today’ and they don’t turn up, expect loads of phone calls.”

Joined up thinking

As police forces change to become more citizen focused the biggest pitfall, says DPA Corporate Communications, is for old problems to get transferred to new business models.

“Most organisations can make a massive improvement to their business problems if they focus on creating joined-up thinking which looks at how you increase the capacity of the organisation to act on an individual level, a team level and an organisational level, and in the relationships that you have with customers,” says Jean Gomes from DPA.

Shaw dispels the notion that such behavioural change comes at a price. “Everyone’s immediate reaction when you start to talk about customer service is this is going to cost you money. The evidence is that it will save you money,” he says. Beyondphilosophy.com describes organisations as travelling on a journey from naïve to natural. A naïve organisation is one that basically couldn’t care less about the customer. In a transactional organisation the customer is just a number, another transaction. The enlightened organisation realises the importance of the customer experience, while for the natural organisation customer service is in its DNA.

Be adaptive

“The question,” says Gomes, “is how can you make your organisation more adaptive; how can you make it more able to deal constantly with challenges in a more and more complex society that’s on your doorsteps?”

The answer, according to Colin Shaw lies in a single word: deliberate. “Is your citizen’s experience deliberate, is your customer experience deliberate. Most customer experiences are consequential, because they haven’t been thought through. If you’re deliberate then you’ve thought it through – you’re saying this is citizen focused, this is what it means in our area, this is what we’re going to do,” says Shaw.

The way you model your organisation to move to this position has to be done carefully. “There are all sorts of paradoxes,” says Gomes. “People tend to sit around and figure out a strategy and response and then create a new process. But people get left until the end, which means that the thing that takes longest to happen, the shift in culture, gets left until last. And also, the people who are going to make it happen have had no input into the process.”

DPA helps organisations to tap the full range of motivation in their workforces. “To ensure employees are motivated around change, requires more than an increase in pay. Forward thinking organisations are tapping into their people’s motivations by including them in the creation of strategy and requiring them to commit to the necessary actions.”

Customer insight

For an organisation to be citizen focused it needs customer insight, customer knowledge, data, research and dialogue groups. “You have to ask what new insights do they offer to help you shape your service around customers needs,” adds Gomes. Ultimately, much of the assessment of the customer experience is gained at the sharp end, out on the street, as Shaw illustrates: “When you go into a shop and pass over your £20 note what do they do? Scan it, and put a pen through it. What does that tell you? They don’t trust you. When they give back the change I ask to borrow their scanner to check it. You should see their faces. The issue is simple: you get the customers you deserve.”

Case study: Yorkshire Water

Yorkshire Water had a bit of a problem in 1995: they ran out of water, which is an issue if you’re a water company. But since then they’ve improved their customer satisfaction from some 51% up to around 91%. And along the way they have also saved £12.5 million because they have defined the customer experience they are trying to give and they have started to work towards that. **Colin Shaw, beyondphilosophy.com**



Getting the message across

The commercial disciplines of marketing and effective communication must be applied to ensure Citizen Focused Policing is understood and accepted by the public.

There's more to marketing than spin and spiel.

It's own professional institute defines it as the management process to identify and satisfy customer requirements profitably. So is it relevant to policing? Yes, says Jenny Norman, from Avon & Somerset Constabulary.

"We can quite easily substitute the word citizen for customers, and replace the word profitability with greater reassurance and with safer communities," she suggests.

Communicating core messages is central to Citizen Focused Policing. “It’s a corporate attitude. Being marketing orientated requires a well-developed and deeply rooted corporate philosophy that guides every part of the organisation in all of its activities and its operations,” she says.

But it isn’t just a question of tagging on marketing initiatives or ticking a marketing box. “It has to actually underpin everything that you do,” says Norman.

Communicating brand values

Evidence of a marketing focused organisation can be found not only through its public statements and its published material, but also in the way that its staff answer the switchboard, respond to telephone calls and deal with customers. Just ask British Airways.

In the commercial sector, British Airways is a leading brand with a strong, well-defined image.

Communication case study: Somerset & Avon

Avon and Somerset, has invested in a software tool called Acorn that classifies residential neighbourhoods, splits up its geographic boundaries, and categorises households into 56 different types. This helps the force identify which households are more vulnerable and so more likely to require its services.

Communication case study: British Airways

BA receives around 50,000 completed customer surveys a month, which generate 10,000 comments that it looks at. These provide a very clear idea of trends and feedback on what it needs to change. The airline also receives around 11,000 complaints (and about 3,000 complements) – a small proportion of the three million passengers it carries every month.



Communication case study: Merseyside

In a radical departure for the region, in 2001 Merseyside divided its territory into neighbourhoods with dedicated inspectors and community-focused teams. Since then, its marketing communications strategy has been focused on citizens and gathering user information to help it decide best way to develop in the future.



Its brand values are safety, reliability, professionalism, responsibility and responsiveness. “Many of these can translate easily into the police service,” points out Victoria Hodson, Head of Customer and Brand Insight at British Airways

Indeed, Jenny Norman includes accessibility, responsiveness and engagement in her view of the style of management the police need to adopt. Clearly there is common ground, but why is marketing relevant to policing if there is nothing to sell and ‘customers’ have no choice on the ‘product’?

“We are, in fact, in the business of selling,” counters Norman. “We need to sell satisfaction, confidence and reassurance to users and non-users, and to do that we need to communicate with them in different ways.”

And the public does have a choice. “People can choose whether or not to contact us, engage with us at a local level, feed intelligence to us, join a neighbourhood watch,” she says.

Long-term approach

A long-term strategic approach is required in communications; one that guides organisations and gives them a vision to buy into and a way to promote to service users. As a result, police forces can encourage the public to participate in their own safety, build better relationships with communities, partners and with their own staff.

At British Airways, Hodson assessed how the company listened and understood its customers. “What do we know they want, how do we make sure we are delivering it and then, finally, how do we respond back to them and make sure we take action on the back of their feedback?”

Research undertaken by the Henley Centre in 2003 identified the power of word of mouth referral and recommendation in winning business. This is a principal British Airways has taken on board.

Good customer relationships come down to engagement, getting people to participate, getting them to tell others how they feel about the police. “We need to develop a better understanding of the communities we serve, and to do this we can learn from commercial practices,” says Norman.

New ways of thinking

When Merseyside Police introduced neighbourhood policing in 2001 its strategic priorities were to improve confidence and satisfaction. It was a new idea to get closer to the customer. “For us, it was a new style and structure. The whole idea behind it was to re-engage with people, and to tackle the distance that had grown up between us and the public,” explains Helen Shaw from Merseyside Police.

Shaw’s department was responsible for measuring satisfaction levels. “If it’s in core strategy then we’ve got to be able to measure it.”

Once you know what your customer thinks you can set about influencing that thinking. “Ultimately, we want people to be thinking ‘well that was so good I am happy to recommend British Airways to my colleague, friend or member of my family,’” says Hodson.

Shaw is adamant that police forces should see marketing for its benefits rather than regard it as spin. “Marketing isn’t spin, it’s not an add on and it’s not just about communication. It’s about understanding what the public wants from us.”



Good call

Effective call handling lies at the heart of Citizen Focused Policing. As a major national standards-setting project paves the way, one force has already scooped a European call centre excellence award.

In his own words, Surrey Police “wasn’t desperately good” at call handling a few years ago but Assistant Chief Constable Mark Rowley now has every reason to smile. His force recently won a Highly Commended Certificate of Excellence in the European Call Handling Awards 2004.

“I think we were the only public sector organisation in what is effectively a private sector competition,” he says. “We’ve spent two to three years focusing on this part of the business.”

The results speak for themselves. “We are seeing gains in the order of 20% in areas like people’s

overall satisfaction with their relationship with Surrey Police,” he adds.

Call handling is important because for the millions of people a year who phone, it is probably the only contact they have with the police.

Action to reality

One of the hardest aspects of applying Citizen Focused Policing for Surrey Police was to make the “philosophical stuff” happen in reality and in the face of rising call volumes. That’s why call handling issues are embedded in the National Policing Plan, the Police Reform Agenda and, recently, in Building Communities: Beating Crime. Developing within this framework is the National Call Handling Standards Project.

“Working with the Citizen Focus Policing Team, we have identified what is important in the call handling environment,” explains Brian Hills, Project Manager, National Call Handling Standards project.

The Standards provide a tool that enables forces to improve quality in call handling. There is, however, still some confusion as to what they actually cover. They are viewed as something of a ‘melting pot’ of ideas. “They do not,” clarifies Hills, “include any technical solution to address specific IT issues, and it is up to forces to decide how they will deliver the standards.”

Where standards really hit home is when Council Tax demands arrive on the doormat every Spring and households see in the expenditure breakdown the slice that goes to the police.

“They want value for money as well as quality of service. They also want to be treated with respect and treated fairly. A major way to do this is to introduce standards into the call handling environments of all forces,” says Hills.

Teamwork combats tension

Achieving quality with phone-based interaction is a challenge, as Surrey Police discovered. “I think we have some difficulties compared to industry. More calls to us doesn’t mean more sales and profit. Increasing volumes brings tensions and can make things quite tricky,” says Rowley.

The 90-strong Surrey Police call centre looks like nothing else in policing, according to Superintendent

Guy Darby, Surrey Police. “It is a key public interface. We have a single contact centre, so all calls come into one place. We have central switchboard, all 999 calls, all other non-urgent calls, and we have a Crime Recording Bureau which records all crimes from the public or either from the officers that go to the scene and then phone us up. So that’s everything coming in. And then we have a control room, one control room, for everything going out.

Surrey Police quickly learned that teamwork would underpin the successful development of its contact centre. The set-up contrasts with the traditional police infrastructure – another fact the force has learned to live with. “We have had rapid promotions of staff from operator to supervisor level, the equivalent of going from PC to Chief Inspector in 18 months. There’s no sort of precedent for that,” says Darby.

Monitoring performance is a crucial element in Surrey’s contact centre. An external consultant specialising in quality monitoring was brought in. “We blended outside industry expertise with our policing knowledge,” says Karen Morris, Customer Services Manager, Surrey Police.

Tools for the job

Once forces acknowledge that achieving the necessary quality standards comes down to giving people the best tools for the job then they are on the path to success. “I don’t think there is any call handler in the country that sits there deliberately wanting to do a bad job, but we don’t always give them the information to do that job effectively and efficiently,” confesses Hills.

There is certainly a greater sense of empowerment coming out of the Surrey experience. Contact centre staff are encouraged to be customer service ‘champions’. “Staff have really good ideas. They were involved in the creation of our guidelines initially and it would have been wrong to not engage with them,” says Morris.

Get the quality standards right and the results should follow in the shape of reduced complaints, reduced time lost on remedial handling of calls, reduced repeat calls, less staff absenteeism, lower attrition levels, improved decision making and increased performance levels. And, of course, more satisfied customers.



Change for the better

The shift to Citizen Focused Policing must be underpinned by a commitment to quality, with change driven from the top and delivered consistently across organisations.

The National Quality of Service Commitment is seen as a key element of implementing Citizen Focus and is set to shake up the process of policing.

“It places pretty stringent demands on us to tighten our processes, for example, follow-up procedures, which is an area where we let ourselves down. It is also about engendering trust and confidence amongst our user communities,” says DCC Steve Finnigan, Chair of the ACPO Standards and Quality Portfolio.

The Quality of Service Commitment draft was taken to ACPO Cabinet in July 2004 and is now at the guidance

and implementation stage. All forces have had opportunity for review and to consult on its proposals.

Setting minimum standards

The Commitment sets minimum standards that the public has the right to expect from any force. It is a national framework for delivering consistency. Central to it are the ideas of local engagement and feedback.

“Making it easier to contact us,” says Superintendent Karen Hives, ACPO Standards and

Quality Portfolio. “It’s all about understanding what the public actually wants and negotiating your response so that it is appropriate.”

She points out that in the past, forces have found themselves in the uncomfortable position where what they think they deliver in terms of quality isn’t necessarily what the public actually receives.

“It may sound obvious, but the public don’t want to be told a response will take three hours if it won’t. People are actually quite satisfied if you say it’s not an emergency and may take longer than not delivering on what you say,” she says.

Every contact leaves a trace

As Superintendent Rob Cooper, from the Plymouth BCU in Devon and Cornwall, observes: “Every contact leaves a trace”. Every time the police engage with the public it leaves behind an impression.

For change to be effective, the public needs to be kept informed, to know their voices count. This, perhaps, is where the real challenge lies. “You need mechanisms in place to ask service users what they think of the service you are providing and how you can improve it,” says Hives.

Change goes beyond just doing something better, or just doing more, believes Cooper. “This is very much new business. And we need to understand the business that we’re now getting in to.”

For that, the police can look to the private sector for guidance. “There are four key hurdles,” says Greg Wilkinson from consultants Accenture. “You have to develop the right understanding of your customer base, and then know how to you deliver your services efficiently. You must think what it means to change the way you manage your people and processes. Finally, to succeed, you need the skills of leadership – navigating, enabling and securing ownership.”

Get it right, and customers’ expectations will rise even further, so you have to continuously improve. It therefore pays to know what you are letting yourself in for and have the mechanisms in place to cope with higher expectations once change has been effected.

Lead from the front

Becoming more customer-focused is not an overnight transformation. Wilkinson cites the case of Tesco,

Change: Sussex enthusiasm for training

In Sussex Police’s Mid Sussex district, staff received innovative, citizen focused training developed with DPA Corporate Communications. “In 20 years service I have never seen such enthusiasm when it comes to talking about customer service within the organisation,” says Chief Inspector Robin Smith.

Change: Tendring public satisfaction boost

A six-month citizen-focused pilot scheme in Tendring BCU, Essex, sought to help victims of domestic burglary by improving the quality of contact with them. The pilot saw satisfaction rates increase to 94.5%.

Change: Bedford Hospital NHS Trust – zero to hero

The Trust went from a zero to three-star rating for operational performance in two years. The Trust set policies and targets that had meaning to its staff and patients. It liberated decision-making, creating structures that made it easier for people to take on responsibility.

widely acknowledged today as a leader in customer service but which has worked long and hard to get there. “What makes Tesco different from other leading supermarkets is there is a consistently high level of customer service and customer focus,” says Wilkinson. Tesco has Terry Leahy at its helm. Police forces need similarly motivated leaders to drive change.

Finally, it’s worth reflecting that Citizen Focus is more than just a philosophy or government initiative. As the President of ACPO, Chris Fox, said at the conference “Citizen Focus is actually crucial to policing and its operational delivery. We can not be successful without a confident and safe public. We can not investigate the most serious and most complex types of crime unless people in their neighbourhoods have confidence in policing. It is actually a key to the core, the foundation of policing. It is not spin or a marketing ploy, it is real policing.”

